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ABSTRACT

Evaluation results for 1993-94 are presented for a Louisiana program to increase family participation in educational services for children with deaf-blindness and to coordinate services with federal initiatives. The program involves student identification, family training, infant and toddler direct services, technical assistance, transition planning services, and systems change. The program evaluation resulted in development of various objectives, including: (1) organize project resources, including staff training; (2) improve identification of eligible children who are deaf-blind; (3) utilize a computerized system to track and maintain information on children referred for evaluation and special education; (4) increase the ability of families to access services for the child, aged birth to 22, who is deaf-blind, and for the family unit; (5) integrate infants and toddlers, aged birth to 2, into community programs and/or assist agencies to provide transition services for this population; (6) improve the provision of services in the least restrictive setting, ensure that the curriculum results in functional outcomes, and utilize published "best practices" standards to evaluate and revise intervention and educational programs; and (7) assist agencies to provide transition services for young adults with deaf-blindness. (SW)

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A Formative Evaluation of Services for Children with Deaf-Blindness in Louisiana

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I. Introduction

In an effort to address the special needs of an identified population of children and youth with deaf-blindness, the Louisiana Department of Education, Office of Special Educational Services, received a federal grant to implement a program designed to increase the family's capacity to participate in educational services for their children with deaf-blindness and to coordinate these services with existing federal initiatives, particularly the Children with Disabilities Education Act. For the past four years, an annual evaluation of this program has been undertaken. It is this ongoing evaluation that is the focus of this paper. While specifically describing the evaluation report for 1993-94, comparisons will be made to two previous evaluation years for the purpose of demonstrating how formative evaluation can assist in adapting a program to fulfill its goals more completely.

II. Purpose for the Program

Louisiana legislation permits the provision of a free appropriate education to children with deaf-blindness ages birth to 22; however, Louisiana is only mandated to provide that free appropriate education to eligible children ages 3 to 22. Although the law allows the provision of educational services from birth, there are impediments to the state's ability to fully implement a full array of services for children with deaf-blindness. These include: 1) under identification of children with deaf-blindness, particularly young children, 2) lack of appropriately trained school system personnel, 3) heavy reliance on segregated facilities and/or classrooms to serve children with deaf-blindness, 4) lack of appropriate transition planning and family support services, and 5) lack of post-school options, including employment.

Therefore, the purpose of this program is to aid in the identification of children with deaf-blindness and to promote the delivery of age-appropriate functional curricula in least restrictive environments. The following general activities were developed to meet the program's stated goals: 1) student identification and data management, 2) family training, 3) infant and toddler direct services, 4) technical assistance provision, 5) transition planning services, and 6) systems change. These activities will be more fully described in a later section of this paper.

III. Needs Assessment

According to 1991 national census information, Louisiana listed 125 children with deaf-blindness, placing Louisiana twenty-first in the nation in the number of school-aged children with deaf-blindness. Of this number, 27 school-aged children with deaf-blindness due to Usher's Syndrome is 27, the highest number reported by any state in the nation. This population is particularly prevalent in the Southcentral part of the state (Acadiana).

As of March, 1992, 106 children with deaf-blindness between the ages of birth to 22 years were eligible for inclusion on the Annual Census of Deaf-Blind children and Youth. Of this number, 63 students are served in local education agencies, 23 are served in a residential facility operated by the Division of Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities, and one student is served in a home study program. The placement status of one student is unclear.

IV. Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives of the Services for Children with Deaf-Blindness in Louisiana Grant for the 1993-94 project year are contained in the project application for that year (LDE, 1993), which was written by staff in the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) Bureau of Planning and Program Development (BPPD). As a point of historical reference, the 1993-94 grant period was the second year in a three year cycle of funding. As part of the formative evaluation process, there has been an ongoing re-organization of the sub-objectives associated with the major objective areas. In summary, the total number of sub-objectives during the initial phase of the grant was 55. This number was dropped 49 in 1991-92, 33 in 1992-93, and to 29 in 1993-94. As part of the first evaluation report, the evaluation team (K. T. Associates, 1992, 1993) that the large number of sub-objectives (i.e., 49) be trimmed by combining and eliminating those that were less important or relevant at the current time. The BPPD chose to make these changes in its 1992-93 grant application, with additional changes in the 1993-94 grant continuation application.

With regard to the major objective areas, the 1993-94 grant continuation application (LDE, 1993) chose to compress the ten major objective areas into eight by combining Objective 7 from the original application, with Objective 5. The remaining objectives then moved up in number

with Objective 8 becoming Objective 7 and Objective 9 becoming Objective 8. Objective 10, which was added in the 1992-93 grant application, was omitted in the 1993-94 grant continuation application because "dissemination" occurs throughout all the other objectives. The rest of this section will briefly describe each of these major objective areas.

Table 1 contains a summary of the differences in objectives and sub-objectives between the 1991-92 project year (the last year of the previous grant cycle) and the 1992-93 project year (the first year of the current cycle), as well as the 1993-94 project year (the subject of this paper). In addition to these structural changes, there were also minor changes in wording throughout the sub-objectives to make them more internally consistent (LDE, 1991, 1992).

TABLE 1

Changes in Objectives and Sub-Objectives for the Deaf-Blind Grant Across Three Project Years

Objective Number in 1991-92	Number of Sub-Objectives in 1991-92	Objective Number in 1992-93	Number of Sub-Objectives in 1992-93	Objective Number in 1993-94	Number of Sub-Objectives in 1993-94
Obj. 1	3	Obj.1	2	Obj. 1	2
Obj. 2	4	Eliminated	- NA -	- NA -	- NA -
Obj. 3	8	New Obj. 2	4	Obj. 2	4
- NA -	- NA -	Obj. 3	3	Obj. 3	3
Obj. 4	9	Obj. 4	5	Obj. 4	5
Obj. 5	4	Obj. 5	2	Obj. 5	2
Obj. 6	9	Obj. 6	7	Obj. 6	7
Obj. 7	3	Obj. 7	3	See Obj. 5	- NA -
Obj. 8	5	Obj. 8	2	Obj. 7	2
Obj. 9	4	Obj. 9	4	Obj. 8	4
- NA -	- NA -	Obj. 10	1	Eliminated	- NA -
Total 9	49	10	33	8	29

Note: NA means not applicable.

The remainder of this section will detail the main objectives of the project, with a list of sub-objectives and the data used to evaluate each sub-objective. Table 6, which appears at the end of this section, provides a matrix that demonstrates the extent to which the expected results for each objective were attained.

Objective 1: Organize project resources in order to effectively complete the work scope of the project.

The project staff must receive training in the provision of appropriate services to infants and toddlers with deaf-blindness if the direct service component of the grant is to be realized. Building the capacity of a technical assistance entity will allow the LDE to assist educational programs and families in the design and implementation of programs associated with quality standards. This objective also addresses the continuing operation of the Advisory Council.

Objective 1.1: Continue to conduct quarterly Advisory Council meetings and maintain the operation of the council in accordance with the by-laws.

Evaluation Data: The BPPD presented the evaluation team with agendas of the meetings scheduled on the following dates: March 18, 1994; May 13, 1994; July 15, 1994; and September 26, 1994. The minutes for the May 13 meeting were obtained by the evaluation team, along with copies of the agenda for each meeting, letters to the Advisory Council announcing the meetings, a copy of the by-laws for the Advisory Council, and an attendance checklist for the meetings. In contrast to the previous year, only one of the four meetings failed to attain a quorum, whereas three of the four meetings the previous year failed to attain a quorum. The number of appointed members was reduced from fourteen to twelve and the percentage of attendance for the meetings was slightly increased.

The average number of appointed members present at the 1993-94 meetings was 6.33, while an average of 5.67 was absent. Three of the appointed members did not attend any of the meetings, and two came to only one of the three meetings, including the chairperson. The ex-officio members attended at an average of 3 per meeting, while an average of 4 was absent. Three of the seven ex officio members did not attend any of the meetings.

Objective 1.2: Provide intensive training sessions for project staff utilizing external consultants and university personnel.

Evaluation Data: The BPPD presented the evaluation team with documentation demonstrating that various members of the project staff attended a number of workshops and off-site courses during the 1993-94 project year.

On November 4-6, 1993, a workshop entitled "Usher Syndrome and Transitions for the Future", sponsored by the Helen Keller National Center - Technical Assistance Center, was held in Seattle, Washington. This workshop was attended by the Project Director.

The Louisiana Department of Education, the Louisiana School for the Deaf, and the SKI*HI Institute of Utah State University sponsored a workshop for personnel who work with multihandicapped sensory impaired children birth to age five and their families. Entitled Project INSITE, two on-site training sessions were held at the Louisiana School for the Deaf in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The first session was held February 24-26, 1994, and the second session was held April 7-9, 1994. Both sessions were conducted by faculty from the SKI*HI Institute at Utah State University. A maximum of twenty-five participants received 3 graduate credit hours from Utah State University for successfully completing the workshop. The Project Director, coordinated this workshop for the Office of Special Educational Services, and also attended, as did a representative from the Technical Assistance Provider, UNOTAC. The results of an evaluation questionnaire administered at the end of the conference are provided in Table 2.

TABLE 2

Average Rating Given to Closed-Ended Items Evaluating The Project INSITE Workshop February 24-26, 1994 and April 7-9, 1994

Item	Workshop 1	Workshop 2
EVALUATION OF THE WORKSHOP		
Length of the Workshop	4.08	4.60
Teaching Materials/Handouts	4.92	4.91
Videos and Other Media	4.84	4.73

Geographic Location	4.73	4.73
Facilities	4.29	4.24
Information You Received About the Workshop Before You Arrived	4.73	4.77
Practical Application of Content	4.52	4.91
Overall I Would Rate This Workshop	4.72	4.91
EVALUATION OF THE TRAINER		
Knowledge of Subject	4.92	4.95
Preparedness	4.92	5.00
Manner of Presentation	4.73	4.82
Clarity and Understandability	4.85	4.91
Encouraging Student Participation	4.85	4.91
Responsiveness to Questions/Needs	4.92	4.95
Fairness	4.96	5.00

NOTE: All items were five point scales. All items had anchor points of 1 = low and 5 = high. The means are based on 26 participant responses for Workshop 1 and 22 participant responses for Workshop 2.

The Project Director, attended a workshop on June 20-24, 1994, entitled "Communication with Learners who are Deaf-Blind", sponsored by the Perkins National Deaf-Blind Training Project and Texas Tech University, and held in San Antonio (Junction), Texas. The participants received two graduate credit hours from Texas Tech University after successful completion of this workshop.

On June 23-24, 1994, the Project Director and a representative from the Technical Assistance Provider, UNOTAC, attended the South Central Regional Meeting of the TRACES Project, held in New Orleans, Louisiana. The focus of this meeting centered on updating state profiles, exploring issues, and developing strategies for working with families.

Objective 2: Improve the school systems and other agencies' ability to identify eligible children for the deaf-blind census.

The maintenance of an accurate data base on all of Louisiana's citizens with deaf--blindness, ages birth to 22 years, and their families, has proven to be particularly problematic. The project proposes to carefully evaluate and adapt where necessary the awareness training that the school systems and other agencies that identify eligible children receive.

The evaluation of infants and toddlers and older children with severe disabling conditions has also proven to be problematic. The early identification and classification of children with deaf-blindness often is not accomplished because appraisal professionals lack the skill and experience to accurately recognize the manifestations of a dual sensory impairment. Therefore, children exhibiting behaviors indicative of a dual sensory impairment are often misdiagnosed or are classified in categories other than deaf-blind and never appear on the deaf-blind census.

Efforts of the project staff relative to this objective should involve providing assistance to members of the district appraisal teams in order to improve their ability to recognize and classify children with deaf-blindness. The sooner children with deaf-blindness are placed on the state's deaf-blind census, the sooner they and their families will receive the specialized interventions that can impact so favorably on child development and family functioning.

Objective 2.1: To utilize a training program for the identification of children with deaf-blindness in accordance with State Department of Education guidelines.

Evaluation Data: The Project Director coordinated the Project INSITE workshop described under Objective 1.2.

Objective 2.2: To provide training to pupil appraisal personnel representing all school districts in Louisiana in the identification of children with deaf-blindness.

Evaluation Data: The Project INSITE Workshop did not address this particular objective. During an interview with the Program Director, she indicated that no pupil appraisal personnel participated in this workshop, even though they were not intentionally left out. No other evidence was presented to indicate that this sub-objective was accomplished.

Objective 2.3: Provide training to early intervention program staff throughout the state on the screening and referral process for suspected infants and toddlers with deaf-blindness.

Evaluation Data: The Program Director coordinated the Project INSITE Workshop described under Objective 1.2.

Objective 2.4: Provide training to instructional personnel assigned to classrooms for students with "multidisabilities" on the screening and referral process for suspected children and youth with deaf-blindness.

Evaluation Data: The Program Director coordinated the Project INSITE Workshop described under Objective 1.2.

Objective 3: Increase the accuracy of the deaf-blindness census.

The benefits of successfully achieving this objective are closely aligned with Objective 2. LANSER (Louisiana Network for Special Education Records) is a computerized system used to track and maintain information on all children referred for evaluation services and on all children eligible for special education services. It includes a deaf-blind data element, and district personnel need more training on how to accurately enter the data into the central pool of information for the state.

Despite initial hopes that the LANSER system would result in the identification of more students for the deaf-blindness census, the BPPD staff now recognizes that the system as it is currently functioning can only help in the verification of students already on the system. BPPD staff have turned their attention to increasing teacher and district level awareness of the need to properly assign individuals to the deaf-blind category.

As in Objective 2, increasing accuracy of the deaf-blind census will also benefit the national census as its accuracy will be concomitantly improved.

Objective 3.1: Retrieve data from revised LANSER system to identify children with deaf-blindness.

Evaluation Data: According to interviews with the Program Director, data from the revised LANSER system were used to verify (not identify) those individuals with deaf-blindness in 1993-94. The LANSER system is not currently used by the school districts in a way that would result in new identifications of deaf-blind individuals.

Objective 3.2: Utilize LANSER data to verify accuracy of current deaf-blind census.

Evaluation Data: In October, 1994, the LANSER data were used to check the accuracy of the current deaf-blind census. As of that date, there were 148 individuals on the deaf-blind census. There were 143 individuals on the deaf-blind census as of June, 1993. Thus, there was an increase of only 3% (5/148) in the period from June 1993 to October, 1994. During interviews conducted with the Program Director, she indicated that increasing the number of individuals on the census was a primary on-going goal for her. However, the increase in the number of individuals on the census since the last project year was not as great as the previous year. It is possible that the project has succeeded in identifying the vast majority of individuals with deaf blindness, but the persistent discrepancies in the census numbers could lead to the assumption that there is still a problem in identifying the targeted population. As reported in the 1991-92 evaluation report (K. T. Associates, 1993), it was estimated that Louisiana should have had 153 individuals on its deaf-blind registry in 1992 (TRACES, 1991), with an estimated range from 117 (minus one standard deviation) to 188 (plus one standard deviation). The census number reported in October, 1994, is closer to this earlier estimation, but still indicates some discrepancies. A possible explanation for these discrepancies is a lack of consensus as to the criteria for inclusion in the LASER census.

The Project Director indicated that she includes individuals in the census even though he/she may reach twenty-two years of age during the project year. Other offices within the LDE indicate that they do not include these individuals in the census, which potentially creates a sizeable discrepancy.

Objective 3.3: Maintain accuracy of deaf-blind census on an ongoing basis.

Evaluation Data: Several updates were produced over the 1993-94 project year, and the accuracy of the deaf-blind census has been maintained, as much as feasible, on an on-going basis with the aid of LANSER information. The census forms, which were revised by the LDE in the 1991-92 project year to assist in obtaining greater accuracy, are in continued usage.

Objective 4: Increase the ability of families to access services which meet the needs of the family unit as well as those of the child with deaf-blindness, aged birth to 22.

Project staff recognize the crucial role that families play in the early identification of children with deaf-blindness and the important contributions that families can make to the effectiveness of the overall intervention process. Strategies that target families, in an attempt to increase the families' ability to access services, have the immediate benefit of increasing the likelihood that those families will be able to better manage the needs and demands of their member within the family and community systems. This will reduce the chance that institutionalization will be considered as an option.

Objective 4.1: Disseminate an informational packet for use with families of newly identified children with deaf-blindness including information of the DIAL system operated by the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council.

Evaluation Data: The 1991-92 evaluation (K. T. Associates, 1993) had suggested that the informational packet be updated with more information related specifically to the deaf-blind child. In response to this, the Project Director indicated in interviews and in the 1993-94 grant application (LDE, 1993) that a major accomplishment of the first part of the 1992-93 project year had been the update of the Parent Information packet, which now contains over 20 informational items, including several concerning the deaf-blind child, *per se*. According to the Contact Log for Deaf-Blind Services, as of September, 1994, the Project Director had disseminated 18 informational packets to parents of newly identified children with deaf-blindness.

Objective 4.2: Disseminate packet to state, regional, and local-level personnel participating in identification, referral, and service delivery activities.

Evaluation Data: According to the Contact Log for Deaf-Blind Services, as of September, 1994, 66 informational packets were sent to the superintendent of each school district in the state.

Objective 4.3: Continue to implement a training seminar for parents and family members related to quality indicators (e.g., integration opportunities) of educational programming for individuals with deaf-blindness.

Evaluation Data: On November 12-13, 1993, the Office of Special Educational Services of the Louisiana Department of Education conducted a workshop entitled, "Usher Syndrome: Educational Updates and Medical Research," at the Louisiana School for the Deaf, Baton Rouge, La. This workshop attracted 39 participants, as verified by the sign-in sheet provided by the

BPPD staff. The vast majority of these participants classified themselves as teachers and service providers, with only two people listing themselves as parents, with one other individual classifying herself as both a parent and a service provider.

The first day of the workshop focused on discussions dealing with communication needs of deaf-blind individuals, as well as guidelines for working with deaf-blind individuals. The second day of the workshop was led by doctors and scientists who provided medical and genetic discussions of Usher's Syndrome, including a description of the latest research on this topic.

Table 3 includes the average ratings given to closed-ended items on consumer questionnaires distributed at the end of the workshop. It should be noted that only 22 of 39 participants responded to the questionnaire. Only one individual indicated that she was a parent, but also indicated that she was a service provider. Therefore, that individual was included under service provider in compiling the questionnaire data. The totals for the respondents in Table 3 are 13 service providers and 9 teachers.

The evaluations for the workshop were generally positive, as can be seen in Table 3. The results may be summarized as follows:

1) Average ratings given by service providers were equal to or greater than 3.8 (on 5 point scales, with 5 being the most positive response) on all twelve items.

2) Average ratings given by teachers were equal to or greater than 4.2 (on 5 point scales, with 5 being the most positive response) on all twelve items.

3) The average overall rating for the conference was 4.3 from the service providers, and 5.0 from the teachers.

4) There was a considerable variation in average ratings between service providers and teachers on several items, particularly 1, 3C, 3E, and 4, each with a variation of .7 or more.

The responses to the "comments" section of the evaluation included the following positive comments:

- Enlightening.
- Pertinent educational information. Thanks for helping me become more aware.
- Very well done.
- Very informative. Good background information on Usher's Syndrome.

- Everything was very well planned, informative and enjoyable.

The negative responses focused on the organization of the workshop, as well as the facilities and accommodations, including the following:

- Overnight accommodations - glad that it was provided, but it needs to be better organized and secure.

- Next conference, we need more information about accommodations, emergency numbers, security, etc.

TABLE 3

Average Rating Given to Closed-Ended Items Evaluating Usher Syndrome Workshop, November 1993

Item	Service Providers	Teachers
1. Organization of Conference	3.8	4.8
2. Location, Facilities, and Accommodations	4.0	4.2
3. Information on the Following Topics:		
A. Communication Needs of Deaf-Blind Individuals	4.3	4.6
B. An Individual Perspective	4.3	4.5
C. Guidelines for Working with Deaf-Blind Individuals	3.9	4.6
D. Deaf-Blind Interpreting The Full Communication	4.0	4.4
E. Panel Discussion	3.9	4.8
F. Types of Usher Syndrome	4.7	5.0
G. Usher Syndrome in Louisiana	4.8	5.0
H. The Genetics of Usher Syndrome	4.8	5.0
I. Usher Syndrome Research	4.6	5.0
4. Overall, I consider this conference:	4.3	5.0

NOTE: All items were five point scales. Items 1 had anchor points of 1 = poor and 5 = excellent. Item 2 had anchor points of 1 = inadequate and 5 = most adequate. Items 3A - 3I had anchor points of 1 = insufficient and 5 = sufficient. Item 4 had anchor points of 1 = poor and 5 = excellent. There were 13 service provider respondents, and 9 teacher respondents.

On July 14-16, 1994, the Office of Special Educational Services of the Louisiana Department of Education presented a parent-teacher conference entitled, "Conference for Families and Teachers of Children and Youth with Deaf-Blindness: Collaboration is the Key", in Lafayette, Louisiana. The conference attracted 37 participants (10 parents, 13 teachers, 14 service providers? The topics included personal futures planning, transition, nutrition, technical assistance, and others, all with the purpose of providing information to parents, teachers and

service providers that will enable these groups to coordinate and collaborate in the best interest of the deaf-blind individual.

The staff of the BPPD provided the evaluation team with composite ratings from an evaluation form distributed at the conclusion of the conference. The average ratings for twenty-one items were calculated and are included in Table 4. Since the data was received by the evaluation team in composite form, average ratings by participant category are not provided. There were no open-ended response opportunities included in the instrument.

In general, the results of the evaluation for this conference are positive, with average ratings of 3.88 (on 5 point scales, with 5 being the most positive response) on all twenty-one items. The overall average rating for the conference was 4.42. The lowest average ratings were on the following items: information provided on the topic of technical assistance (3.88); and, the effectiveness of the conference speaker on technical assistance (3.84).

TABLE 4

Average Rating Given to Closed-Ended Items Evaluating
The Conference for Families and Teachers
of Children and Youth
July 14-16, 1994

EVALUATION OF THE CONFERENCE	
Item	Avg.
1. Organization of the Conference	4.54
2. Location, Facilities, and Accommodations	4.81
3. Information in the Following Topics:	
A. Personal Futures Planning	4.3
B. Transition	4.44
C. Nutrition	3.96
D. Technical Assistance	3.88
E. Louisiana Relay System	4.68
F. Audiology	4.84

EVALUATION OF THE CONFERENCE	
Item	Avg.
G. Usher Syndrome/Educational Implications	4.69
H. Communication	4.67
4. Effectiveness of Conference Speakers:	
A. Personal Futures Planning	4.57
B. Transition	4.62
C. Nutrition	4.14
D. Technical Assistance	3.84
E. Louisiana Relay system	4.62
F. Audiology	4.82
G. Usher Syndrome\Educational Implications	4.79
H. Communication	4.81
5. Overall Conference Rating	4.42

NOTE: All items were five point scales. Items 1,4, & 5 had anchor points of 1 = poor and 5 = excellent. Item 2 had anchor points of 1 = inadequate and 5 = most adequate. Item 3 had anchor points of 1 = insufficient and 5 = sufficient. The means are based on 37 participant responses (10 parents, 13 teachers, and 14 service providers), although not all items received responses. Data did not differentiate responses based on audience categories.

Objective 4.4: To cooperate with current parent training and support activities to ensure that information related to children with deaf-blindness is included within the scope of these programs.

Evaluation Data: On May 5-7, 1994, the Office of Special Educational Services of the Louisiana Department of Education sponsored a Parent Conference on Special Education, in Alexandria, Louisiana. The Project Director participated in the conference.

Objective 4.5: To identify additional sites demonstrating quality indicators and assist parents and family members in visiting sites to become familiar with effective educational practices.

Evaluation Data: No model sites were identified during the 1993-94 grant

period. A program quality checklist, which was adapted from the Task Force on Severe Disabilities (TASH) with crosslistings to appropriate Louisiana requirements, will be useful in identifying model sites in the future. The Project Director indicated that this process would begin in November, 1993. No evidence of this process was presented to the evaluation team.

Objective 5: Integrate infants/toddlers with deaf-blindness (birth - 2) into community programs and/or assist appropriate agencies in the design and implementation of transition services for this population.

There are clear indicators that Louisiana is unable to meet the demand for infant/toddler family intervention services by continuing to rely on the network of private, primarily segregated service providers. For example, all service providers within the state maintain a long waiting list. Parents of infants and toddlers with known or suspected disabilities have voiced concern and frustration over the lack of services. Given the enormous challenges of developing a statewide infant intervention service system in Louisiana, it is obvious that steps must be taken to creatively and efficiently use multiple service delivery systems and agencies, by integrating infant/toddlers with deaf-blindness (birth-2) into existing community programs whenever possible.

Times of transition are obviously stressful times for both children with disabilities and their families. Changes in services and providers often result in new challenges and problems. For example, families of toddlers with deaf-blindness who are preparing for transition to public school noncategorical classrooms in Louisiana may be overwhelmed with concerns and questions about the quantity and quality of services in a classroom situation. Periods of transition can also be difficult for professionals representing both the "sending" and "receiving" agencies. P.L. 102-119 has emphasized the importance of anticipating and carefully planning transitions, but there has been little guidance or training available for professionals on how to effectively collaborate with families and other agencies to arrange for transitions that are as nondisruptive as possible.

By providing information on the importance of addressing transition issues early and in an ongoing manner, the project will help families and professionals anticipate and plan for many of

the accommodations and changes that will occur as children and their families move from one service to another. Thus, the disruptions and subsequent stressors can be minimized. Project personnel will assist in this process by emphasizing the importance of including transition goals on all Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs), by providing direct assistance in developing specific transition plans and by assisting in the implementation and evaluation of child transition plans. Therefore, the accomplishment of this objective will benefit the infant/toddler, his or her family, and service providers.

Objective 5.1: To assist local service provider(s) and family members in assessing child and family training and support needs.

Evaluation Data: The Project Director coordinated the Project INSITE workshop described under Objective 1.2.

Objective 5.2: To notify infant service providers of the availability of technical assistance in transition planning for infants and toddlers with deaf-blindness.

Evaluation Data: A letter was mailed by the UNOTAC Technical Assistance Provider to schools notifying them that technical assistance is available to them.

Objective 6: Improve the capacity of intervention and educational programs to appropriately serve children with deaf-blindness, ages birth - 22 by: a) providing services in least restrictive settings; b) ensuring that the curriculum results in functional outcomes; and c) utilizing published ``best practices'' standards to evaluate and revise intervention/educational programs.

It is unclear as to the quality of existing educational programs for children with deaf-blindness. Since most teachers are without appropriate certification, it is probable that most programs are not age appropriate and are developmental in nature. Provision of technical assistance to educational programs will assist in the design and implementation of functional curricula, which will promote interactions in natural settings with non-disabled peers. Technical assistance services will assist education service providers in revising their programs and will also increase the number of individuals available to provide training to instructional personnel

throughout the state. The University of New Orleans Technical Assistance Center (UNOTAC) has been primarily responsible for providing this technical assistance,.

Information regarding the accomplishment of this objective was obtained in an interview with staff members and through documentation supplied by the UNOTAC staff. The documentation from the UNOTAC was somewhat generic in nature; that is, much of it related to more than one of the seven specified sub-objectives of Objective 6. This is not surprising since in the 1991-92 project year, the UNOTAC had, in fact, a set of objectives that were different from those of the BPPD (K. T. Associates, 1993). Even though the two sets of objectives for the 1992-93 project year were supposedly the same, it was apparent that the UNOTAC was more oriented toward the accomplishment of its own self-defined mission than toward the specific BPPD objectives.

Technical assistance has been an ongoing concern of this project, as indicated in prior evaluation reports (K. T. Associates, 1991, 1992). While staff members at the UNOTAC and the BPPD have demonstrated a sincere effort to improve their working relationship in terms of communication and coordination of services, problems continued during the 1993-94 project year. During an interview, a Technical Assistance Provider for UNOTAC, discussed these problems and provided her perspective as to what contributed to them during the 1993-94 project year. The following information was extracted from that interview.

In year one of the project, two employees of UNOTAC, provided technical assistance to deaf-blind individuals around the state, pursuant to the Deaf-Blind Grant. During that year, the number of individuals being assisted was relatively small and they had no problem meeting demands. On September 8, 1993, one employee accepted another position and the other employee was provided with a leave of absence to undertake an internship out-of-state for the Fall semester, 1993. The sudden departure of the technical assistance staff created a transition problem, which was further complicated by the lack of sufficient funding to attract a full time Ph. D. level person to fill the position. The UNOTAC chose instead to hire two part time employees.

Upon the return of one of the original employees, it was discovered that no one had provided technical assistance during the period from September, 1993 through December, 1993. The part time employees were engaged in trying to identify and locate individuals for the

program, which was supposed to be the role of the Project Director. It took the entire month of January to get the technical assistance component running again, which is indicated by the absence of TA Contact Logs until February, 1994.

According to the UNOTAC employee, there was a lack of a clear understanding as to the role of the UNOTAC and the BPPD, which led to the practice of UNOTAC staff members trying to identify persons in need of assistance, instead of simply providing assistance to those individuals identified by the BPPD. Once the census count increased, this became an impossible task for the UNOTAC staff. As a result, there was a delay in the provision of technical assistance in some instances. The procedures employed by the UNOTAC staff were designed by themselves and at the time they were unaware that they were not working. In retrospect, "we should have approached the Project Director about it, but at the time there was a lack of communication between UNOTAC and BPPD." Overall, the UNOTAC employee feels that a lack of proper funding, poor communications, and the grant design itself, all contributed to the problems that they experienced.

According to this same employee, there were positive results of the association between the UNOTAC and the BPPD in relation to the provision of technical assistance for the Deaf-Blind Project as follows:

1) There was an increased awareness of the needs of deaf-blind individuals around the state of Louisiana.

2) People recognized the UNOTAC as a resource and contacted them directly, requesting assistance for deaf-blind individuals.

3) "We changed the lives of some children, teachers, and families."

4) The conferences in which the UNOTAC participated provided people with positive ideas about assisting deaf-blind individuals.

Due to these organizational problems, the quality and the quantity of data provided to the evaluation team for the 1993-94 project year are insufficient to adequately determine whether the objective was accomplished. Since a decision had already been made involving the severance of ties between the UNOTAC and the BPPD for the 1994-95 project year, it is important to examine the problems that existed between these two agencies in an effort to avoid the same problems

with the new technical assistance provider (The Human Development Center, Louisiana State University Medical Center).

A) Providing services in the least restrictive settings;

Objective 6.1: To evaluate the LRE status of all children with deaf-blindness on the census on an annual basis.

Evaluation Data: The only data submitted by the staff at the UNOTAC was a copy of the TA Contact Log, February through August, 1994. The listings on the log are generic in nature and cover multiple sub-objective areas. It is impossible to identify what was actually accomplished in each activity. In addition, the UNOTAC staff developed a graph indicating how many hours each month were spent on each sub-objective. There is considerable overlapping in this regard as well. For example, an entry on the February, 1994, log indicates that 20 hours were spent on site and the sub-objectives involved were 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.6, and 6.7. However, on the graph 20 hours were indicated for 6.6, and one hour each for 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, and 6.7. It is impossible to determine how much time was actually spent on each sub-objective.

The logs indicate that for the specific time period of February through August 1994, 14 hours were spent in activities designed to accomplish this sub-objective.

Objective 6.2: To provide assistance via the Technical Assistance Center to local provider or school system personnel in the utilization of best practices for implementing educational programs for individuals with deaf-blindness.

Evaluation Data: The UNOTAC staff utilized a TA Contact Log in the 1993-94 project year (February through August, 1994, only) designed to provide a uniform intake procedure and assessment process for all contacts made through the center. Information from these logs have been used in this evaluation to partially assess how successfully goals 6.2, 6.3, 6.5 and 6.7 have been attained.

While it is apparent that the UNOTAC is working to accomplish Sub-Objective 6.2, the evidence provided the evaluation team by the center is not focused enough on this specific sub-objective to allow us to conclude that it has been completely accomplished. Therefore, we conclude that Sub-Objective 6.2 has been partially accomplished.

Objective 6.3: To assist service providers for infants/toddlers with deaf-blindness in utilizing integrated options for service delivery (e.g., integrated day/family care).

Evaluation Data: Same evidence as for Objective 6.2.

B) Ensuring that the curriculum results in functional outcomes;

Objective 6.4: To provide support via Technical Assistance Center to local providers and school system personnel in the design and implementation of an activity-focused curriculum for infants/toddlers with deaf-blindness and school-age children with deaf-blindness and moderate to profound mental retardation.

Evaluation Data: The LRETAP is located at UNO in the same office suite as the UNOTAC, and is in its sixth year of operation. In the interview with UNOTAC staff, they indicated that they work closely with the LRETAP. No specific evidence of that working relationship was supplied by the UNOTAC.

Objective 6.5: To provide support via Technical Assistance Center to local providers and school system personnel in the use of an integrated related service model for children with deaf-blindness.

Evaluation Data: Partial support for the accomplishment of this objective may be found in the TA logs. Also, information presented during workshops sponsored by the UNOTAC addressed this sub-objective.

As noted above, the evidence provided the evaluation team by the center is not focused enough on specific sub-objectives to allow us to conclude that they have been completely accomplished. Therefore, we conclude that Sub-Objective 6.5 has been partially accomplished.

C) Utilizing published "best practice" standards to evaluate and revise intervention/educational programs;

Objective 6.6: To gather training materials related to best practice standards for children with deaf-blindness in cooperation with Technical Assistance Center personnel and other preservice and inservice training programs.

Evaluation Data: The UNOTAC maintains a library of materials related to individuals with severe/profound disabilities, including materials specific to individuals with deaf-blindness. The UNOTAC also has a comprehensive reference list and binder of articles related to deaf-

blindness, and this reference list was included in an earlier evaluation report (K. T. Associates, 1993).

Objective 6.7: To incorporate best practices within technical assistance and direct service activities.

Evaluation Data: According to UNOTAC employees, evidence for "best practices" are addressed in the TA logs. Also, information presented during workshops sponsored by the UNOTAC addressed this sub-objective.

As noted above, the evidence provided the evaluation team by the center was not focused enough on the specific sub-objectives to allow us to conclude that they have been completely accomplished. Therefore, we conclude that Sub-Objective 6.7 has been partially accomplished.

Objective 7: Assist appropriate agencies in the design and implementation of transition services for young adults with deaf-blindness.

While numerous interagency efforts are beginning to occur in Louisiana, the number of young adults with deaf-blindness who have been the recipients of proper transition planning to date is still small. Design and implementation of these services with this population will serve as an example to other educational programs throughout the state on how to implement transition programs for young adults with deaf-blindness. Restrictive programming options are not only associated with school services for this population, but also for adult service providers. It is imperative that young adults with deaf-blindness exit school into less restrictive adult options such as supported employment.

As the number of children with deaf-blindness who have been successfully transitioned into dignified adult options increases, opportunities for personnel training and parent support increase. Thus, a benefit of this objective will be that educators and adult service providers will learn strategies for implementing transition services for children with deaf-blindness.

Objective 7.1: To encourage, via written communication, all school programs to utilize the approved transition planning process for all young adults with deaf-blindness.

Evaluation Data: The Project Director provided the evaluation team with a copy of a letter mailed to all school districts in the state, announcing an opportunity for local-level service

providers to participate in a program co-sponsored by the Louisiana State Interagency Team for Youth with Deaf-Blindness and the Helen Keller National Center-Technical Assistance Center (HKNC-TAC). The program will be based on a partnership between state-level and local-level "core" teams designed to plan and promote services to transition young adults with deaf-blindness from high school to adult life. A series of three 2-day workshops were established to provide these local-level "core" team members with information on these transition services. A needs assessment form was attached to the letter sent to the local LEA's, however, the evaluation team was not provided with the results of this survey.

Objective 7.2: To assist school system personnel, parents, and adult service providers in developing and implementing individual transition programs.

Evaluation Data: A series of three 2-day training workshops described under sub-objective 7.1 were conducted on November 9-10, 1993; January 25-26, 1994; and March 29-30, 1994. The training sessions were established at three sites around the state based on the areas with the highest number of young adults with deaf-blindness. These sites were: the Louisiana School for the Deaf (Baton Rouge); Lafayette Parish; and St. Landry Parish. The purpose of these workshops is to provide training to local-level "core" team members in the transition of young adults with deaf-blindness from high school to adult life. Results of a consumer satisfaction survey conducted at the conclusion of the first training session held in Baton Rouge are listed in Table 5.

TABLE 5

Responses to Consumer Satisfaction Forms Rating
LA Local Team Technical Assistance Training Workshop #1
November 9-10, 1993

Item	Avg
1. TA/Training objectives met.	4.5
2. Knowledge and preparedness of TA providers.	4.4
3. Value of ideas for use on my job or with my child.	4.1
4. Opportunities to make new contacts/meet with people.	4.6
5. Organization of the TA/Training	4.7
6. Overall rating of the TA providers	4.7
7. Overall rating of the TA/Training	4.7

Note: All scales had five points ranging from 1 = poor to 5 = excellent. There were 10 completed forms from the TA/Training Workshop.

Objective 8: Examine the impact of systematic policies and practices on children with deaf-blindness and their families.

The impact of specific policies at the state and local levels must be constantly examined in light of specific outcomes for children with deaf-blindness and their families. Currently, many regulations in place restrict the ability of educational programs to appropriately serve children with deaf-blindness (e.g., identification and reporting of children). Improved policy statements and agency regulations on a state and local level will dramatically improve the ability of educational programs to serve children with deaf-blindness.

Objective 8.1: Assist State Department of Education personnel in reviewing existing policies and bulletins (e.g., eligibility criteria) to determine their impact on service provision to individuals with deaf-blindness.

Evaluation Data: The Project Director indicated that she is a member of a state policy committee that is charged with systemic change among state agencies. Although this panel is in place, no evidence was presented that any action was taken in this regard during the project year.

Objective 8.2: Utilize resulting data to identify areas in need of revision in order to improve service provisions to children with deaf-blindness.

Evaluation Data: There were no written summaries of need areas developed during the 1993-94 project year.

Objective 8.3: Provide assistance in policy development via existing structures to include, but not limited to: P.L. 102-119 State Interagency Council and subcommittees, Office of Special Education Services task forces, and Comprehensive System of Personnel Development.

Evaluation Data: Same evidence as designated in Objective 8.1.

Objective 8.4: Document changes in policies and procedures designed to improve services to children with deaf-blindness on the state and local levels.

Evaluation Data: Project year 1992-93, as was the case in the previous year of the grant (K. T. Associates, 1993), did not see many changes in policies and procedures. These two relatively inactive years followed a very active project year 1990-91 in terms of changes in policies and procedures (See K. T. Associates, 1992 for details). Such changes appear to be cyclical in nature, and BPPD staff has only a limited influence on the impetus for such change. According to BPPD staff, project year 1993-94 may see several changes in policies and procedures due to the new Systems Change Grant.

V. FINDINGS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Table 6 contains a summary of the accomplishments of the 29 sub-objectives for the project. In the table, there are four categories of accomplishment: A = accomplished, PA = partially accomplished, NA = not accomplished, and APY = accomplished in previous years. It is important to remember in summarizing the results of the 1993-94 project year that there are four fewer sub-objectives than in the 1992-93 project year. Of those four sub-objectives, one was accomplished, two were partially accomplished, and one was not accomplished. By subtracting these sub-objectives from the present year, there is an indication that there has been a

sharp increase in the number of sub-objectives that were accomplished. There is a remainder of seven sub-objectives that were partially accomplished and four that were not accomplished. While the results overall are positive, of the four sub-objectives listed as not accomplished, three are the same sub-objectives that have been cited as not accomplished over the last three evaluation periods (K. T. Associates, 1991, 1992, 1993).

TABLE 6

Summary Table of Accomplishment of Objectives, 1993-94 Project Year

Objective	Status[1]			
	A	PA	NA	APY
Objective 1: Organize project resources in order to effectively complete the work scope of the project.	1	1	0	0
Objective 1.1: Continue to conduct quarterly Advisory Council meetings and maintain the operation of the council in accordance with the by-laws.		√		
Objective 1.2: Provide intensive training sessions for project staff utilizing external consultants and university personnel.	√			
Objective 2: Improve the school systems and other agencies' ability to identify eligible children for the deaf-blind census.	3	0	1	0
Objective 2.1: Utilize a training program for the identification of children with deaf-blindness in accordance with State Department of Education guidelines.	√			
Objective 2.2: Provide training to pupil appraisal personnel representing all school districts in Louisiana in the identification of children with deaf-blindness.			√	

Objective	Status[1]			
	A	PA	NA	APY
Objective 2.3: Provide training to early intervention program staff throughout the state on the screening and referral process for suspected infants and toddlers with deaf-blindness.	✓			
Objective 2.4: Provide training to instructional personnel assigned to classrooms for students with "multidisabilities" on the screening and referral process for suspected children with deaf-blindness.	✓			
Objective 3: Increase the accuracy of the deaf-blindness census.	2	0	1	0
Objective 3.1: Retrieve data from revised LANSER system to identify children with deaf-blindness.			✓	
Objective 3.2: Utilize LANSER data to verify accuracy of current deaf-blind census.	✓			
Objective 3.3: Maintain accuracy of deaf-blind census on an on-going basis.	✓			
Objective 4: Increase the ability of families to access services which meet the needs of the family unit as well as those of the child with deaf-blindness, aged birth to 22.	4	0	1	0
Objective 4.1: Disseminate an informational packet for use with families of newly identified children with deaf-blindness including information of the DIAL system operated by the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council.	✓			

Objective	Status[1]			
	A	PA	NA	APY
Objective 4.2: Disseminate packet to state, regional, and local-level personnel participating in identification, referral, and service delivery activities.	✓			
Objective 4.3: Continue to implement a training seminar for parents and family members related to quality indicators (e.g., integration opportunities) of educational programming for children with deaf-blindness.	✓			
Objective 4.4: Cooperate with current parent training and support activities to ensure that information related to children with deaf-blindness is included within the scope of these programs.	✓			
Objective 4.5: Identify sites demonstrating quality indicators and assist parents and family members in visiting sites to become familiar with effective educational practices.			✓	
Objective 5: Integrate infants/toddlers with deaf-blindness (birth-2) into community programs and/or assist appropriate agencies in the design and implementation of transition services for this population.	2	0	0	0
Objective 5.1: Assist local service provider(s) and family members in assessing child and family training and support needs.	✓			
Objective 5.2: Notify infant service provider(s) of the availability of technical assistance in transition planning for infants and toddlers with deaf-blindness.	✓			
Objective 6: Improve the capacity of intervention and educational programs to appropriately serve children with deaf-blindness, ages birth-22 by: a) providing services in the least restrictive settings; b) ensuring that the curriculum results in functional outcomes; and c) utilizing published "best practice" standards to evaluate and revise intervention/education programs.	1	6	0	0

Objective	Status[1]			
	A	PA	NA	APY
Objective 6.1: Evaluate the LRE status of all children with deaf-blindness on the census on an annual basis.		✓		
Objective 6.2: Provide assistance via Technical Assistance Center to local provider or school system personnel in the utilization of best practices for implementing educational programs for individuals with deaf-blindness.		✓		
Objective 6.3: Assist service providers for infants/toddlers with deaf-blindness in utilizing integrated options for service delivery (e.g., integrated day/family care).		✓		
Objective 6.4: Provide support via Technical Assistance Center to local providers and school system personnel in the design and implementation of an activity-focused curriculum for infants/toddlers with deaf-blindness and school-age children with deaf-blindness and moderate to profound mental retardation.		✓		
Objective 6.5: Provide support via Technical Assistance Center to local providers and school system personnel in the use of an integrated related service model for children with deaf-blindness.		✓		
Objective 6.6: Gather training materials related to best practice standards for children with deaf-blindness in cooperation with Technical Assistance Center personnel and other preservice and inservice training programs.	✓			
Objective 6.7: Incorporate best practices within technical assistance and direct service activities.		✓		
Objective 7: Assist appropriate agencies in the design and implementation of transition services for young adults with deaf-blindness.	2	0	0	0
Objective 7.1: Encourage, via written communication, all school programs to utilize the approved transition planning process for all young adults with deaf-blindness.	✓			

Objective	Status[1]			
	A	PA	NA	APY
Objective 7.2: Assist school system personnel, parents, and adult service providers in developing and implementing individual transition programs.	✓			
Objective 8: Examine the impact of systematic policies and practices on individuals with deaf-blindness and their families.	1	1	1	1
Objective 8.1: Assist State Department of Education personnel in reviewing existing policies and bulletins (e.g., eligibility criteria) to determine their impact on service provision to individuals with deaf-blindness.		✓		
Objective 8.2: Utilize resulting data to identify areas in need of revision in order to improve service provisions to children with deaf-blindness.			✓	
Objective 8.3: Provide assistance in policy development via existing structures to include, but not limited to: P.L. 102-119 State Interagency Council and subcommittees, Office of Special Education Services task forces (e.g., Ad Hoc committee on Bulletin 1508), and Comprehensive System of Personnel Development.	✓			
Objective 8.4: Document changes in policies and procedures designed to improve services to children with deaf-blindness on the state and local levels.				✓
TOTALS	**16**	**8**	**4**	**1**

[1] A = Accomplished; PA = Partially Accomplished; NA = Not Accomplished; APY = Accomplished in Previous Years

Additionally, there were 10 questions specified in the 1991-92 grant application for the external evaluation (LDE, 1991), and each of these questions will be addressed in the following section. The grant application (LDE, 1991) specified that the external evaluator would support "his/her conclusions from a data base." For the 1993-94 project year, this data is primarily qualitative in nature, developed from interviews and document analysis, but there was some

evidence from the quantitative analysis of consumer satisfaction forms. The project director has been encouraged to provide consumer satisfaction data for all workshops and seminars and efforts in this regard have been made. But, there are still instances where data were missing, particularly, those activities in which UNOTAC was involved. For the 1993-94 project year, consumer satisfaction data was not received for workshops that they sponsored, nor were there any data for parent and family perceptions of services provided. Reasons for this lack of data have been addressed in other areas of this evaluation report. Since the contract for technical assistance has been awarded to the Human Development Center, Louisiana State University Medical Center (HDC) for the 1994-95 project year, it is hoped that the new provider will address this need and provide this much needed data in the future, so that future evaluations will include even more consumer satisfaction surveys and other sources of quantifiable information.

1. What objectives were fully achieved?

Looking at Table 6, it may be seen that 16 of the objectives were fully accomplished during the 1993-94 grant period. Additionally, one other objective was accomplished during previous years of the grant. Thus, 59 percent of the stated objectives of the grant (17/29) were fully achieved by the end of the 1993-94 grant period.

Project year 1993-94 saw a high percentage of accomplishment in Objectives 2, 3, and 4: improving agencies' ability to identify eligible children for the deaf-blind census; increasing the accuracy of the deaf-blind census; and increasing the ability of families to access services which meet the needs of the family unit as well as those of the child with deaf-blindness.

2. What objectives were partially accomplished?

As indicated in Table 6, eight of the objectives were partially accomplished during the 1993-94 grant period. Thus, 28 percent of the project's activities (8/29) were partially accomplished in this year. The area with the largest number of partially accomplished goals was: Objective 6, improving the capacity of intervention and educational programs to appropriately serve individuals with deaf-blindness.

All of the sub-objectives in Objective 6 were to be accomplished by the UNOTAC, which had a few grant-related problems during the 1993-94 period. It was hoped that the UNOTAC would be able to provide much more technical assistance in the 1993-94 grant period than it had

in previous years, since its intake and assessment systems were established. The overall rating of accomplishments for Objective 6 in 1993-94 was, however, about the same as for 1992-93.

Due to the problems cited in this report, the quantity and the quality of data provided by the UNOTAC to the evaluation team actually declined in comparison to the previous project year. Appropriate documentation in this area is crucial, and the documentation for each of the sub-objectives was not as thorough as it should have been during project year 1993-94, with data actually indicating that no technical assistance activity took place between September, 1993 through January, 1994. For instance, the evaluation team was given a sample of project materials (i.e., UNOTAC contact logs) and was told that this information related to all seven sub-objectives. It appears that the UNOTAC staff members did not separate out the other six specific sub-objectives of Objective 6, but instead saw them as part of the overall service mission of the center, even though this was specifically requested in the 1992-93 evaluation report (K. T. Associates, 1993).

The problems of the UNOTAC, however, go beyond its ability to provide appropriate specific documentation to the evaluation team. In the 1991-92 evaluation (K. T. Associates), we indicated that there were communication problems between the UNOTAC and the BPPD that prevented the center from accomplishing some of its goals as specified by the Deaf-Blind Grant. With the arrival of a new Project Director at the LDE in October 1992, the BPPD and the UNOTAC staffs took deliberate steps to improve their communication. They conversed regularly during much of the project year, and at an interview in July 1993 indicated that they intended to have bi-weekly telephone conversations about the project. Also at this interview, the UNOTAC staff came up with a variety of ways in which to improve the operation of their technical assistance, including hiring another staff member one-half time to better coordinate their direct service activities.

Unfortunately, the two paid UNOTAC staff members took other employment in the late Summer, and as of September 8, 1993 there were no staff members at the center and not until January, 1994, did the UNOTAC recommence with the services that it was contracted to provide. In order for the TAC to go unmanned for almost four months, the communication between the BPPD and UNO appears to have seriously broken down. There also appears to be some

disagreement between the BPPD and UNO regarding the budget and the general thrust of the project's activities. For instance, UNO appears to see the Deaf-Blind Grant as supplying part of the monies required to accomplish the "synergistic" effect that he wants the UNOTAC to have on special education services to all children with special needs. The BPPD staff, on the other hand, appears to be more focused on the needs of individuals with deaf-blindness, at least as far as monies from this grant are concerned.

3. What objectives were not accomplished?

As noted in Table 6, four objectives were not accomplished in the 1993-94 grant period. This indicates that 14 percent of the total objectives (4/29) were not accomplished during that period. This represents the same number of objectives that were not accomplished in 1991-92 (K. T. Associates, 1992), with three of the four objectives having failed to be accomplished in previous years.

The four objectives that were not accomplished in 1993-94 are the following:

a) Objective 2.2: Provide training to pupil appraisal personnel representing all school districts in Louisiana in the identification of children with deaf-blindness. Data consisting of sign-in sheets and consumer satisfaction surveys from workshops pertaining to this objective indicate that no district pupil appraisal personnel attended these sessions, although teachers and other service providers did so.

b) Objective 3.1: Retrieve data from revised LANSER system to identify children with deaf-blindness. Data from the revised LANSER system were used to verify (not identify) those individuals with deaf-blindness in 1993-94. The LANSER system is not currently used by the school districts in a way that would result in new identifications of deaf-blind individuals.

c) Objective 4.5: Identify additional sites demonstrating quality indicators and assist parents and family members in visiting sites to become familiar with effective educational practices. No model sites were identified during the 1993-94 grant period, although BPPD staff indicated that they hoped it would be implemented in this project year.

d) Objective 8.2: Utilize resulting data to identify areas in need of revision in order to improve service provisions to children with deaf-blindness. There have been no written summaries of need areas developed during any of the 1990-94 project years (K. T. Associates,

1992, 1993, 1994).

Apparently, the use of the LANSER system as a mechanism for identifying new individuals with deaf-blindness is not practiced at this time. The system (as it is currently operating cannot do this), and BPPD staff do not believe that it can be made to do so without major staff training activities. Since this is unlikely to happen, it would be best to eliminate this sub-objective in the next grant proposal.

Sub-Objective 2.2 went unmet in 1993-94 because there was no specific effort to insure that district pupil appraisal personnel would be provided with this training. The Project Director, indicated that district pupil appraisal personnel were not specifically invited to the various workshops and seminars held during the year, but they were not prevented from attending. It is recommended that this sub-objective be addressed in the coming project year. Since it is understood that one of the primary goals of this grant is the identification of individuals with deaf-blindness, the fulfillment of Sub-objective 2.2 should enhance the potential for meeting that goal, due to the fact that these people come into contact with students at the local level and may be in a better position to determine whether a student qualifies under this grant. However, if the district pupil appraisal personnel are not properly trained in detecting these individuals, many deaf-blind individuals will go unidentified.

Sub-objective 4.5 was unmet in 1993-94, but the Project Director indicates that it will continue to be a priority in 1994-95. Since the BPPD staff plans to address these sub-objectives, there is no need to eliminate them.

Objective 8, examining the impact of systematic policies/practices on the deaf-blind, is an area which may require additional attention by the BPPD, or which might be better trimmed down. Objective 8.2 (utilizing reviews of existing policies to identify areas in need of revision in order to improve services) has not been addressed during the past four years of the project. Unless there is an unforeseen redistribution of staff priorities and time in 1994-95, it will not be addressed then either. It may be time to eliminate or alter this sub-objective.

Additionally, Objective 8.4 (documenting changes in policies and procedures designed to improve services for the deaf-blind) was marked as accomplished in previous years because there were such activities in 1990-91. As noted above, this sub-objective is (to a large degree) out of

the control of the BPPD: it can only be accomplished if there are policy initiatives in the state during the project year in question. It may also be time to eliminate or change this sub-objective.

4. Were project services characterized by best practices?

There were four objectives related to best practices: 4.5, 6.2, 6.6, and 6.7. Of these four objectives, one (Objective 6.6) was accomplished in 1993-94, two were partially accomplished (6.2 and 6.7), and one was not accomplished (4.5). The same results were found in the evaluation of the 1990-91, 1991-92, and 1992-93 project years (K. T. Associates, 1992, 1993, 1994).

In general, the groundwork for the use of best practices were laid in project years 1990-91 and 1991-92. The program quality checklist, or quality indicators tool, was developed. A variety of forms were developed by the UNOTAC that would allow an assessment of best services practice for implementing educational programs and utilizing integrated options. A central core of materials on best practices is now on file at the UNOTAC.

On the other hand, several aspects of the sub-objectives associated with best practices were not met in the 1993-94 project year, as they had not been met in 1990-93. No model sites demonstrating quality indicators were identified during 1993-94, although BPPD staff contended that this would begin to happen in 1993-94. Technical assistance emphasizing best practices was conducted by the UNOTAC in 1993-94, but unspecific documentation from the TAC made evaluation of the accomplishment of sub-objectives 6.2 and 6.7 difficult.

5. What were the major barriers encountered by the project?

It should be noted that there are fewer identified major problems in 1993-94 than there had been in 1992-93 (K. T. Associates, 1994). The hiring of a new Project Director in October 1992 resulted in greater organization of several aspects of the deaf-blind project, as will be detailed later in this section. Nevertheless, a few problems persisted during the 1993-94 grant period. These include:

a) Uneven communication flow between the BPPD and the UNOTAC. This unevenness in communication became apparent when no one was hired to replace the two paid UNOTAC staff members, leaving no one working on the Deaf-Blind Grant from September 8, 1993 through the end of that project year and into the next year. A simple question arises: Why didn't the

BPPD and UNO conduct a search and replace these two staff members while the other staff members were still there to teach them "the ropes"? This breakdown in communication is a continuation of similar problems described in the 1990-93 evaluations (K. T. Associates 1992, 1993, 1994). It appears that the UNOTAC continues to operate as a separate entity, to a large degree outside the goal structure and supervision of the BPPD.

It became apparent during the 1993-94 project year that the possibility of correcting these problems with the UNOTAC was not present. The fact that UNOTAC has its own mission, which does not mesh completely with that of the Deaf-Blind Grant, makes it advisable to seek technical assistance elsewhere during the 1994-95 project year. The Human Development Center, LSUMC, has been contracted to provide these services for the coming year, which should correct many of the problems present during the 1993-94 project year.

b) Advisory Council does not seem to be taking a leadership role in driving the grant. This continues to be a problem, despite the Project Director's efforts to restructure the membership of the Advisory Council. The Advisory Council should be more active, especially in areas such as statewide policy changes and the identification of family members to help other families with deaf-blind children and youth. Perhaps the membership on the Advisory Council should be changed again to give it a more activist orientation. The failure to attain a quorum at 25% of the meetings in 1993-94, while an improvement over 1992-93 when 75% of the meetings failed to attain a quorum, indicates that some Council members are not sufficiently committed to the Council and should be replaced immediately.

c) Continued problems with the LANSER system. BPPD staff have given up on this system as a mechanism to identify new individuals for the deaf-blind census, since it is apparent that officials at LEAs simply have not had enough training to properly utilize the deaf-blind indicator. The BPPD staff has made efforts to train local officials in the proper procedures involved in LANSER during the 1993-94 project year. It is hoped that in the future when knowledge of this system becomes better understood by all districts in the state, that LANSER will provide a method to identify new individuals for the deaf-blind census.

6. What strategies appeared to be working in overcoming those barriers?

- There is now a Project Coordinator, who was hired at the beginning of the 1992-93 project year. Her hiring, in October 1992 provided greatly needed stability for the project, enhanced the organization of several aspects of the project and provided a greater focus on the specific needs of individuals with deaf-blindness. She is well aware of the problems in accomplishing the sub-objectives as noted above. She and the evaluation team are continuing to discuss strategies to redress these problems.

- A major accomplishment of the first year under the new Project Coordinator was the 34% increase in the number of individuals on the deaf-blind census during the first six months of her employment. She has indicated that increasing the number of individuals on the census is a primary on-going goal for her. She indicated that she increased the number on the census in the first six months of her employment by: 1) increasing state and district efforts to locate deaf-blind infants and toddlers; 2) making efforts to increase teacher-level awareness so that they can more accurately detect and report deaf-blind individuals; and 3) utilizing UNOTAC information.

- The evaluation team was given completed consumer satisfaction scales from several BPPD and UNOTAC workshops and conferences during 1993-94 and while the information continues to improve, there could be improvement in this area as some events still went unevaluated in 1993-94.

- The 1992-93 and 1993-94 grant proposals had a greatly reduced number of project objectives. This reduction was partially based on recommendations by the evaluation team, which is now more involved with BPPD staff in establishing sub-objectives and the processes for measuring them. For instance, the evaluation team met with the Project Director in January 1994 to begin preparing the 1994-95 grant proposal.

7. Did project services appear to result in positive changes for individuals and their families?

The BPPD continues to service individuals with deaf-blindness, including infants/toddlers, and interview data from the BPPD staff indicates that the parents and families of these individuals are satisfied with the service they have been provided. However, it is recommended that the BPPD staff undertake the process of conducting a consumer satisfaction survey with these parents and family members in order to provide quantifiable data for this area.

Evidence from Objective 3 indicate that the Deaf-Blind census is still missing individuals who should be served, although the BPPD did an outstanding job in 1993-94 of trying to identify individuals with deaf-blindness and increasing the number on the roll. If you don't know who is deaf-blind, you certainly cannot provide them services.

The BPPD conducted its annual parent and professional conference in July 1993. (See Objective 4.3). Information regarding this conference (located in Table 4) indicates that the participants enjoyed the conference and found it quite informative. Unfortunately, only 10 adult family members attended this conference, down from 15 the previous year.

Much was done in 1993-94 regarding the dissemination of a new informational packet for parents of the deaf-blind, as noted under Objectives 4.1 and 4.2. Nevertheless, more effort could be expended in developing a formal registry of parents to provide counseling and support to the parents of children with deaf-blindness, as required under Objective 4.4.

8. Did project services appear to result in improved professional practice?

At least 11 of the sub-objectives relate to professional practice in five general areas: identification of individuals with deaf-blindness (Sub-Objectives 2.1, 2.2); screening and referral (Sub-Objectives 2.3, 2.4); direct services (Sub-Objectives 5.1, 5.2); technical assistance to service and education providers (Sub-Objectives 6.3, 6.4, 6.5); and transition services (Sub-Objectives 7.1, 7.2).

Of these 11 objectives related to professional practices, seven were accomplished during 1993-94, three were partially accomplished, and one was not accomplished. The percentage (64%) of these "improved professional practice" sub-objectives marked as accomplished was roughly equal to all the sub-objectives (where 62% were marked as accomplished).

9. Did project activities result in systems changes via policy changes?

This issue was addressed in the consideration of Objective 8. There wasn't any "comprehensive review of existing policies and bulletins" to determine their impact on individuals with deaf-blindness in 1993-94, just as there hadn't been such a review in 1990-93

(K. T. Associates 1992, 1993, 1994). Since no such review occurred, then policy areas in need of revision specifically with regard to the deaf-blind were not identified. The BPPD needs to decide if Objective 8 is indeed important, and either eliminate it or commit staff resources to accomplish the sub-objectives associated with it.

10. What additional evaluation data need to be collected in subsequent years of project operations?

With regard to quantitative evaluation data, the following data need to be collected in more detail in future years:

a. Measures of consumer satisfaction related to all training workshops. While more information was available in 1993-94 than in previous years, there were still workshops that went unevaluated. More emphasis should be placed on the completion of consumer satisfaction scales for all workshops in 1994-95.

b. Measures of parental satisfaction related to direct and indirect services. The BPPD needs to collect and report more information on how well the direct and indirect services of the Deaf-Blind Grant meet the needs of the families of individuals with deaf-blindness.

c. Measures related to technical assistance. The BPPD staff completed contact logs and incidences of dissemination activities in 1993-94. Staff should be encouraged to spend the time necessary to complete forms related to all activities associated with the Deaf-Blind grant. In 1993-94, the UNOTAC did not provide the evaluation team with a good sample of both contact logs and bi-weekly written reports of contacts with individuals receiving services. It is hoped that the new technical assistance provider will be encouraged to complete these logs and reports in a manner that will facilitate the evaluation of those individual sub-objectives pertaining to technical assistance

d. Measures of the number of individuals and families receiving services in integrated community settings. This issue was described under Objective 6.1. The HDC and the BPPD must establish a consensus as to who is responsible for evaluating the status of all individuals with deaf-blindness on the census. This may need to be a joint responsibility of the two organizations. LRE data is needed on all individuals on the census, not just those directly served by the technical assistance provider.

e. Evaluations of ITPs. In order to accomplish Objectives 5.1 and 5.2, BPPD personnel need to monitor and examine ITPs. Assessments of the quality of these ITPs would prove valuable to the evaluation team.

As for additional qualitative evaluation data, all 11 sub-objectives that were either partially accomplished or not accomplished must be considered. For each of these sub-objectives, more comprehensive evaluation data must be gathered in subsequent years of project operation in order to demonstrate that the sub-objectives were met.

The following 12 recommendations are relevant to the 1994-95 project year.

1. Develop an open line of communications with the new technical assistance provider and establish a consensus of roles for each agency.

Efforts have been made over the last two years to correct problems that have existed between the BPPD and the UNOTAC without total success. Since the technical assistance component is a vital part of the Deaf-Blind Grant, it was imperative that an agency be identified and contracted to fulfill these needs. It is important that past mistakes not be allowed to recur by immediately establishing an understanding between the two agencies as to what their roles and responsibilities will be. A well defined communication link should be established from the beginning.

2. Change membership in the Advisory Council to make it a more active group.

Minutes of the Advisory Council indicate that it serves mainly to accept reports regarding the grant and other deaf-blind issues. The Council should be more active, especially in discussing policy issues that affect them and in locating parents to help other parents of the deaf-blind.

Those members who do not attend regularly, resulting in quorums not being met, should be replaced immediately with members who have more commitment to the project. These new members may be recruited from the Organizational Committee for the Louisiana Association for Deaf/Blind/Multihandicapped, as well as other activist groups.

3. Increase the number of students on the deaf-blind census by increasing school system and agency awareness so that they can more accurately detect individuals with deaf-blindness.

The BPPD, under the guidance of the Project Director, dramatically increased the deaf-blind census in 1993-94, but there continues to be a serious undercount of individuals with deaf-blindness in the state. BPPD staff must provide more inservice training on the detection, screening and referral of individuals with deaf-blindness starting in 1994-95. This means that the training must occur in a wider geographical area than was the case in 1993-94. The BPPD may have to re-allocate staff time to accomplish this goal.

4. Encourage all staff associated with the project to gather and analyze consumer satisfaction forms from all workshops concerning individuals with deaf-blindness and to keep better records of measures related to technical assistance, including dissemination activities.

While much more consumer satisfaction information was available in 1993-94 than in previous years, there were still workshops that went unevaluated. More emphasis should be placed on the completion of consumer satisfaction scales for all workshops in 1994-95. The evaluation team, under the direction of the BPPD, should help coordinate the collection and analysis of these forms. The BPPD should use the evaluation team more in accomplishing this recommendation.

The BPPD staff and the technical assistance provider should be encouraged to spend the time necessary to complete forms regarding all activities associated with the Deaf-Blind grant. In 1993-94, the UNOTAC failed to provide the evaluation team with a good sample of both contact logs and bi-weekly written reports of contacts with individuals receiving services. Documentation from the BPPD needs to be more complete in 1994-95 than it was in 1993-94.

5. Increase the attendance of both parents and teachers at the annual parent and professional conference held each Summer in Baton Rouge.

The BPPD should redouble its efforts to increase the attendance of both parents and teachers at this important meeting. Announcements regarding the meeting and its agenda should go out early, and there should be multiple mailings. Perhaps the Advisory Council could get involved in increasing attendance by calling prospective participants after the multiple mailings have been sent. A reasonable attendance goal should be set in 1994-95, such as double the number of participants who attended in 1993-94.

6. Identify educational sites demonstrating quality indicators.

While this objective has been included in all of the 1990-94 project years, it has never been accomplished. The BPPD and technical assistance provider need to communicate more closely regarding this objective and, if it is an important part of the project, begin identifying sites in project year 1994-95.

7. Expend more effort in networking the parents of deaf-blind children and youth.

Objective 4.4 calls for the identification of parents to provide counseling and support to the parents of children with deaf-blindness. While some informal contacts were encouraged in 1993-94, a more formal organizational registry should emerge in 1994-95. The Organizational Committee for the Louisiana Association for Deaf/Blind/Multihandicapped should be helpful in putting together this registry. This project could be an effort of the Advisory Council.

8. Ensure that a good sample of IFSPs and ITPs of individuals with deaf-blindness are gathered in 1994-95.

The BPPD should get more involved in the collecting, assessing and disseminating of IFSPs and ITPs of individuals with deaf-blindness during project year 1994-95. Little was accomplished in this area in the 1990-94 project years, since the BPPD did not have the staff necessary to comprehensively collect and assess the IFSs and ITPs. Perhaps with the assistance of the new technical assistance provider, the BPPD could start collecting and assessing a larger sample of IFSPs and ITPs in 1994-95.

9. Identify more comprehensively the responsibilities for evaluating LRE status of all individuals on the census.

The technical assistance provider and the BPPD must determine who is responsible for accomplishing Objective 6.1 regarding assessing the LRE status of all individuals on the census. Hopefully, some form of shared responsibility will emerge from these discussions. The BPPD should establish a goal for evaluating the LRE status of a certain percent of all individuals on the census in 1994-95.

10. Encourage the technical assistance provider to document technical services more specifically in 1994-95 in reference to the sub-objectives of Objective 6.

The documentation that the UNOTAC supplied the evaluation team in 1993-94 was too generic in nature; that is, much of it related to more than one of the seven specified sub-

objectives of Objective 6. This made the job of the evaluation team in assessing the accomplishment of the sub-objectives unnecessarily difficult and resulted in generic "partially accomplished" ratings for six of the seven sub-objectives.

The BPPD and the evaluation team need to more closely monitor the activities of the technical assistance provider in 1994-95 to determine the actual progress made in the attainment of specific sub-objectives 6.1 to 6.5 and 6.7. They also need to strongly encourage the new technical assistance provider to document technical services more specifically in 1994-95 in reference to the sub-objectives of Objective 6.

11. Reassign BPPD resources to accomplish the sub-objectives that were not accomplished in 1993-94.

The BPPD Project Coordinator, with the assistance of the evaluation team, should determine which of the unaccomplished sub-objectives noted above are truly important and assign the resources needed to at least partially meet them. (See evaluation question #3 in the section above for a review of these unmet sub-objectives and difficulties encountered in accomplishing them.)

12. Increase the project money utilized for evaluation.

With a project of this size, allocating only 1.6% of the budget for evaluation (LDE, 1992) is hardly adequate. Evaluation can pay for itself multifold. Increasing the evaluation budget to $4,000.00 (which is about 2.6% of the total budget), would allow for more formative evaluation work on the part of the team.

VI. REFERENCES

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